



SENATOR RUNNER'S WEEK IN REVIEW

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Waste Watchers: LAUSD Battle Burns On

Ulysses S. Grant once said, "In every battle, there comes a time when both sides consider themselves beaten, then he who continues the attack wins." Unfortunately, in the battle over control of the Los Angeles Unified School district, both sides have continued to mount expensive attack campaigns in the hopes that the other side will get tired of fighting and admit defeat.

According to the *Los Angeles Daily News* (June 30, 2006), ***"Los Angeles Unified officials so far have spent nearly \$250,000 in district funds to mount a massive, orchestrated fight against Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's school-takeover plan."*** School board members

have spent thousands of dollars on everything from flying to Sacramento to lobby legislators and busing parents to Sacramento to testify at committee hearings to ***"bring[ing] opponents of mayoral control from around the country to speak at a May 31 board meeting."***

Although the LAUSD has a communications department consisting of a staff of seven and a budget of \$862,000, the board has spent nearly \$236,000 since November to receive ***"guidance from high-priced political consultants on how the district can overhaul its image and rally opposition to Villaraigosa's proposed school-takeover legislation."*** According to LAUSD officials, the school board had no choice but to pay for these costly consultants because ***"their communications department is so lean...that it cannot handle more than day-to-day tasks."*** So what exactly falls into the "day-to-day operations" of the communications department if it doesn't consist of improving and maintaining the image of the district, or getting the message out about the issues of greatest importance to the LAUSD – simply answering phone calls?

Of course, there are two sides to every story, and, in this battle, the school board isn't the only one spending a lot of money in order to secure a victory. After leaving the Assembly, Mayor Villaraigosa used remaining funds to create a Committee on Government Excellence and Accountability – a political action committee. Although the spokesman for the committee ***"would not disclose how much money is in the account or how much money had been spent on efforts so far to promote the legislation,"*** one can assume that it is no small amount. In addition, the ***"mayor's communications office, which has nine employees - one dedicated***

News of the Week

[Runner's Bill to Build New Training Facility in Southern California for Correctional Officers](#)

[Runner's Bill Would Give Two New State Prisons](#)

[Mayor's Opponents Say Amendments Further Hurt LAUSD Bill](#)

[Victorville Daily Press Staff Rewarded for Nabbing Suspected Serial Killer](#)

[Runner's Bill for Victorville to Build Projects Faster Passes Committee](#)

[Debra Saunders Column: No Drivers License Behind the Wheel](#)

[GOP Plans Anti-Illegals Push](#)

[Bill Limiting Greenhouse Gases Could Hurt California and Climate](#)

full time to education issues- who are paid a total of \$688,000 annual salaries," has also been working to gain support for mayoral control.

As the battle over control rages on, parents and community groups are starting to wonder aloud how much is too much. Neither side appears to be willing to throw in the towel, with the district instead renewing its vow to ***"continue to spend whatever it takes to fight the bill in Sacramento."*** While district officials would like the public to believe that spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to fight Mayor Villaraigosa is in the best interest of the children, it is hard to deny that the amount of time and money that has gone into both sides of this campaign could have been better spent in the classroom rather than on engaging in costly combat.

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